

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action mailed September 13, 2002. Accordingly, with a three-month extension of time a response is due on or before March 13, 2003. After this Amendment, claims 18-21 are pending in the application.

The Examiner has required that Applicant amend Figs. 1 and 2 to designate a legend such as prior art. Applicant has amended the drawings as required and has submitted a request for drawing charge herewith.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-17 as being anticipated or rendered obvious by U.S. Patent No. 4,106,176 to Rice. Rice discloses a method and apparatus for tightening fasteners. In particular, Rice discloses a method and apparatus for obtaining a desired degree of tension in a fastener prior to installation. Rice states that this method may be utilized to establish a starting point for rotation measurement corresponding to a zero torque slope intercept shown as point G in Fig. 1. Rice recognizes that should the slope of the torque versus angle signature change, the device may be required to be shut down.

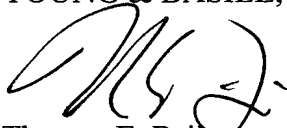
Applicant has cancelled claims 1-17 and added new claims 18-21. Applicant submits that the audit method of claims 18-21 is patentably distinct from the tightening method of Rice. In contrast to Rice, claims 18-21 claim a method used to determine the comparative clamping loads between a group of installed threaded fasteners. A common example is lug nuts on a wheel. These threaded fasteners may be installed using the methods of Rice or any other method. The present invention provides for the measurement and comparison of audit angles, see, e.g., Figs. 5 and 6 together with associated specification at page 8, which provide important information about relative clamp loads. Importantly, an audit can be conducted on installed threaded fasteners to determine that fasteners were installed correctly to begin with or whether there is a loose fastener in a collection of fasteners.

Rice however, has no teaching or suggestion as to an appropriate method to determine whether a fastener is, in fact, providing an appropriate clamping load after installation.

Applicant submits that new claims 18-21 patentably distinguish over Rice. Applicant solicits allowance of claims 18-21. If the Examiner believes a telephonic interview would aid in prosecuting the instant application, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned at the below captioned number.

Respectfully submitted,

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